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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDIN CAPTION)

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: FEDERATION COUNCIL PASSES LATVIAN BORDER TREATY

REF: MOSCOW 4309

¶1. (SBU) On September 19, the Russian Federation Council voted 177 to one to ratify the border treaty with Latvia. Despite fears that the Just Russia party might cater to the nationalist vote in election-year politics (reftel), they instead voted for the treaty with near unanimity in the first reading. The next step in the ratification process is the signature of President Putin. MFA Baltic desk diplomats informed us that although Putin is currently in Sochi, they do not expect a significant delay and said the document will be signed in a "normal amount of time". After the treaty is signed, it will be published in the newspaper Rossiskaya Gazeta, and will go into effect ten days after publication.

¶2. (SBU) FM Lavrov was scheduled to travel to Riga on September 17 to exchange the instruments of ratification, but canceled the visit because parliamentary ratification was not finalized. The MFA told us that no date has been set to reschedule the visit, but that it would occur when the treaty process was complete.

¶3. (SBU) Comment: The signing of this treaty is an important step in normalizing the often-volatile relations between Latvia and Russia. Although contentious issues such as citizenship for ethnic Russians in Latvia remain on the table, the ratification of the border treaty shows that concrete progress can be made.
Burns